

United States Senate

June 5, 2023

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Denis R. McDonough
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20420

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human
Services
200 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Marcia L. Fudge
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban
Development
451 7th St., SW
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretaries Vilsack, Becerra, Fudge, and McDonough,

As Chairs of the Committees of jurisdiction, we write to urge your Departments to take swift action to implement provisions of H.R. 3746, *the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023*, regarding important exemptions for covered individuals accessing food through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). It is vital that your agencies leverage existing authorities to limit administrative challenges and promote equitable implementation of these provisions across all SNAP state agencies.

SNAP is a lifeline for low-income households across the country, providing an average of just \$6.10 per person per day to buy food. However, federal law limits certain “able-bodied” adults, aged 18 to 54, to only three months of SNAP benefits every three years unless they meet strict work requirements or are otherwise exempt. Vulnerable populations like homeless individuals, veterans, and youth aging out of foster care often face significant barriers that make it challenging to consistently meet or document compliance with existing work requirements, even when these individuals are working. H.R. 3746, signed by President Biden on June 3, 2023, directs states to exempt these populations from having to meet these work requirements within 90 days of enactment through October 1, 2030.

To the extent you have the relevant authorities, we ask that your agencies share data needed for state SNAP agencies to correctly identify and certify newly exempt individuals as quickly as

possible. Guidance issued to states from your agencies should ensure related policies are implemented consistently across all states to equitably reach the highest number of eligible participants, reduce administrative and paperwork burdens on both state agencies and SNAP participants, and to ensure participants are adequately screened for exemptions prior to losing access to benefits. This is particularly timely as states work to reinstate the “able-bodied” time limits following the end of the Public Health Emergency. We also encourage you to work together to ensure that local partner agencies and direct service organizations working with exempt individuals in our communities have the information they need to ensure their clients have full access to the assistance for which they are eligible.

Thank you for your efforts to help vulnerable populations stretch their food budgets. Should your agencies need additional authority in order to implement these provisions, we ask that you work expeditiously with Congress so that we may address the need.

Sincerely,



Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry



Ron Wyden
Chairman
Senate Committee on Finance



Sherrod Brown
Chairman
Senate Committee on Banking,
Housing, and Urban Affairs



Jon Tester
Chairman
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs